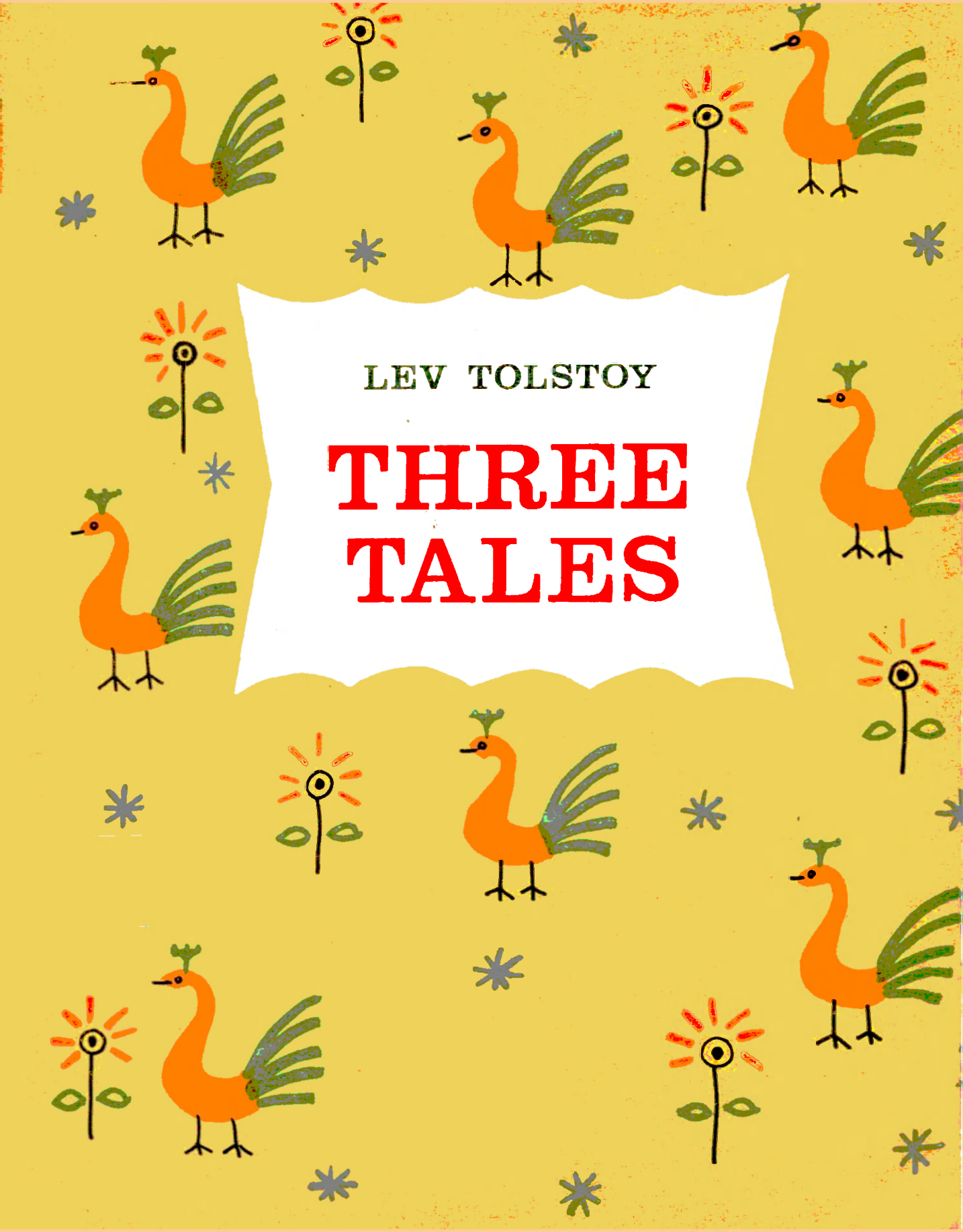
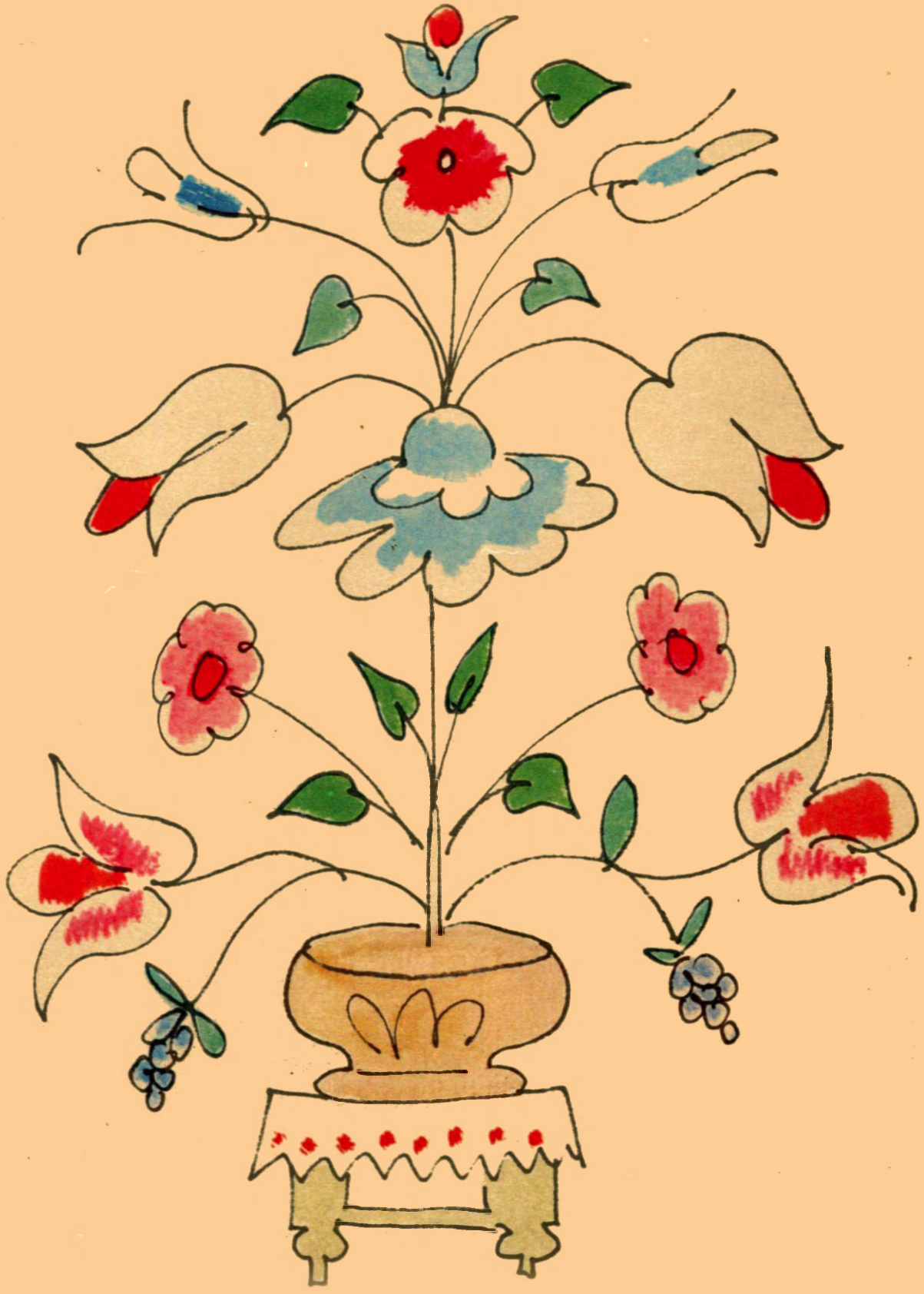

LEV TOLSTOY
THREE TALES



LEV TOLSTOY

THREE TALES

Illustrations by A. Kokorin

Malysh Publishers, Moscow

HOW THE POOR PEASANT DIVIDED THE GEESE

Once there lived a poor peasant. One day he ran out of grain and so he decided to go and ask the landlord for some. Not to come empty-handed, he roasted a goose and took it along.

The landlord accepted the present and said, "Thank you for the goose, old fellow, but look here, I have a wife, two sons and two daughters. How shall we divide it among all of us?"

"Let me have a try," said the poor peasant. And with that he took a knife, chopped the goose's head off and said, "You'll have the head, because you're head of the house."

Then he chopped off the parson's nose and gave it to the landlord's wife, saying, "You sit all day long at home, looking after things. So here's the seat of honour for you."

Next he chopped the legs off and gave them to the sons, saying, "You keep treading your father's land, so to you the legs I hand."

After that he chopped the wings off and gave them to the daughters, saying, "You'll fly away from your home soon, so here's a wing for each of you. And I'll take whatever is left."

And so he took the best part of the goose. The landlord laughed heartily and gave him grain and money into the bargain.

Now the rich peasant heard that his poor neighbour had managed to get grain and money for a goose. So he roasted five geese and went to the landlord with them.

The landlord accepted the present and said, "Thank you for the geese, but look here, I have a wife, two sons and two daughters. How shall we divide five geese among the six of us?"

The rich peasant thought and thought but could not think of a way out. So the landlord sent for the poor peasant and told him to share out the geese.

And the poor man did. He gave one goose to the landlord and his wife and said, "Now there're three of you with a goose." He gave the second to the sons, saying, "And this makes three of you, too." He gave the third to the daughters, saying, "And now there are three

of you, too." And the last two geese he took for himself, saying, "Look, there're three of us, too."

The landlord laughed heartily and gave the poor peasant some more grain and money. But the rich peasant was just sent packing.

LITTLE TOWHEAD

Once there lived an old man and his wife who were very sad because they had no children. One day an old man went off to the field to plough, while his wife stayed at home to make some pancakes. She baked a panful and sighed:

"I wish we had a son. If only we did he'd take these pancakes to his father. But as it is, I have no one to do it."

Just then a tiny boy came out of the pile of tow and said, "Good day to you, Mother dear."

"Goodness me!" the woman gasped. "Where did you come from? What's your name?"

"See that pile of hemp, Mother? You scoured it and

put aside, and I've hatched out there. My name's Towhead. Now, let me take the pancakes to Father."

"How can you, Towhead? You're so weeny."

"Never mind, Mother," the boy said.

So the old woman tied the pancakes into a kerchief and gave the bundle to Towhead. And off he dashed to the field, bundle in hand. He ran and ran till he came to a mound.

"Hey, Father dear," he called. "Help me over the mound. I've brought you some pancakes."

The old man heard somebody calling him, saw the little fellow, and helped him over the mound.

"Where did you come from, Sonnie?" he said, most surprised.

"From the pile of tow there at your home," said Towhead, giving him pancakes.

So the old man sat down to eat, and the boy said to him, "Let me plough for you, Father, while you're having your lunch."

"How can you? You are not strong enough for that."

But little Towhead seized hold of the wooden plough and off he went. He kept ploughing away and singing as he ploughed.

Presently the landlord came driving by. He saw the old man quietly eating his lunch and the horse ploughing all by itself. The landlord got out of his couch and said, most surprised,

"How is it that your horse is ploughing all by itself, old man?"

"Oh, that's my son ploughing," the old man said. "And it's him singing, too."

The landlord drew nearer and heard the singing and saw the little boy.

"You sell me that boy, old man," said the landlord.

"Oh no! How can I!" the peasant said. "He's the only son I have."

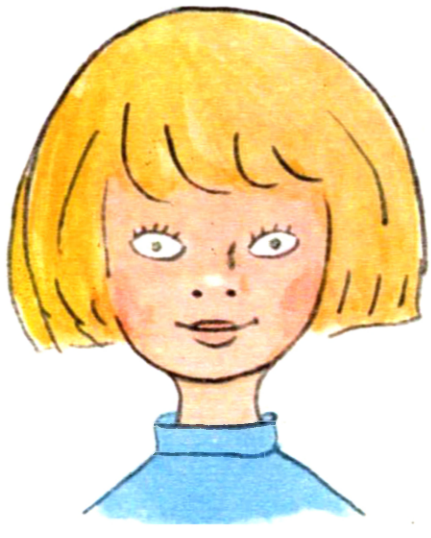
But Towhead whispered, "Sell me, Father. Don't worry, I'll run away from him."

The old man did as his son bade him. The landlord paid him 100 roubles, took Towhead, wrapped him in his handkerchief and put him into his pocket. When he got home, he said to his wife,

"I've got a fine surprise for you, my dear."

"Oh! Let me have a look."

The landlord pulled the handkerchief out of his pocket, untied it and saw that there was nothing inside. The boy had long since run home to his father.



THE KING AND THE SHIRT

A king happened to be gravely ill, and so he said:

"He who cures me shall have half of my kingdom."

So the sages assembled and tried to think of a way to help him. And only one sage had any idea of a way to cure the king.

"A happy man's shirt," he said, "that's the remedy. When the king puts it on, he'll recover at once."

The king sent his servants all over the kingdom to find a happy man. They searched far and near, they searched high and low but not a single man did they find who was quite content with everything.

Some were wealthy but ill, some were healthy but

poor, some were both wealthy and healthy but they had either a bad wife or wicked children. Every one had his complaint.

One day the king's son was passing by a hut when suddenly there came a man's voice from inside. "Now, thank God. I've done well today. I've worked hard and I've eaten well. And now it's time to go to sleep. What else do I need?"

The king's son was overjoyed. He ordered his servants to go and give money to the happy man, as much as he wanted, and to take his shirt for the king. And so they went in and demanded the shirt. But the happy man was so poor that he didn't have a shirt to his name.

Lev Tolstoy

THREE TALES

Illustrations by A. Kokorin

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